Single Family Residence Design Guidelines, City of Santa Barbara

Pages 5 and 6 and H-6 through N-2 text only. For full document and illustrations, please visit the **Zoning Counter at 630 Garden Street.**

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Introduction

According to the Santa Barbara General Plan, "Santa Barbara has, as its primary… [goal], the provision of a particularly desirable living environment." The City's hillsides are a unique resource. The Conservation Element of the General Plan also states that "hillside developments provide vistas for residents who inhabit those structures. Yet, residential developments render hillsides less natural as topography and vegetation are modified."

The Conservation Element recognizes several threats to Santa Barbara's visual resources including grading, view blockage by new structures, ridgeline development and the loss of important trees. It recommends provisions to protect and enhance the scenic

Changes in neighborhood that are not on the hillsides of the City have raised a number of concerns in recent years. These concerns involve new and remodeled houses that are significantly larger than surrounding houses, that use materials and designs that are incompatible with their surroundings, that invade the privacy of surrounding properties or are so sited that they block light

The City Charter assigns responsibility for carrying out the mandates of the General Plan to the Planning Commission. It also gives direction to the Architectural Board of Review (ABR). The ABR must consider "…the preservation and protection as nearly as practicable of the natural charm and beauty of the area in which the City is located and the historical style, qualities and characteristics of the buildings, structures and architectural features associated with and established by its long, illustrious and

The Guidelines are primarily a guide for the homeowner, architect, developer and builder who are designing new single family homes or remodeling existing houses. These Guidelines also provide a framework for the design review process for City staff, ABR, Planning Commission and City Council.

Within the landmark districts, design is handled primarily by the Landmarks Committee and will be more strictly reviewed for consistency with the architectural styles allowed within the districts. See the Landmarks Committee Guidelines and Guidelines, El Pueblo Viejo District (1987) for more informaiton.

The design policies and implementation techniques set forth in these Guidelines are not meant to discourage unique and inventive design solutions; they serve as the guide for the decision makers to make the necessary findings for their design related decisions.

Objective For full document and illustrations, please visit the **Zoning Counter at 630 Garden Street.**

Legal Authority For full document and illustrations, please visit the **Zoning Counter at 630 Garden Street.**

Hillside Housing Techniques

Design Policies and Techniques

In order to approve new houses and additions to existing houses in the Hillside Design District, the ABR (and the Planning Commission for those houses subject to its review) must make the following findings:

1 The public health, safety and welfare will be protected.
2 The grading and development will be appropriate to the site, have been designed to avoid visible scarring, and will not significantly modify the natural topography of the site or the natural appearance of any ridgeline or hillside.
3 The project will, to the maximum extent feasible, preserve and protect any native or mature trees with a minimum trunk diameter of four inches (4") measured four feet (4') from the base of the trunk. Any specimen tree, skyline tree, or oak tree with a diameter of four inches (4") or more at four feet (4') above natural grade that must be removed will be replaced on a one-to-one basis, at a minimum. Designated Specimen, Historic and Landmark trees will not be removed.
4 The development will be consistent with the scenic character of the City and will enhance the appearance of the neighborhood.
5 The development will be compatible with the neighborhood, and its size, bulk, and scale will be appropriate to the site and
6 The development will preserve significant public scenic views of and from the hillside.

1 **Blend the house into its surroundings.**
- 1.1 Set building into hillside.
- 1.2 Step the building up or down the hill.
- 1.3 Minimize the visual impact of grading by doing most of the cut under the buildings.
- 1.4 Use materials and colors to reduce the apparent bulk.
- 1.5 Avoid exposed underfloor areas.
- 1.6 Avoid excessive soil removal and fill.
- 1.7 Avoid large downhill cantilevers.
- 1.8 Avoid tall support columns for overhanging areas.
- 1.9 Select colors that are compatible with the neighborhood.
- 1.10 Fit in with hillside topography and background.
- 1.11 Avoid interrupting the natural ridgelines.
- 1.12 Avoid using fill to hide downhill foundations.

2 **Building height should be in proportion to the style and size of the house and to the lot area**
- 2.1 Set back higher portions of the structure to reduce the appearance of height.
- 2.2 Vary height of building elements.
- 2.3 Minimize areas of maximum height.
- 2.4 Avoid using designs intended for flat lots on the hillsides.
- 2.5 Avoid exposing underside of buildings or decks.

3 **Limit the amount of grading to avoid erosion visual and other impacts.**
- 3.1 Preserve slopes greater than 30% by avoiding grading and clearing.

3.2 Avoid visual scarring.
3.3 Preserve natural ridgelines.
3.4 Set house below ridgeline.
3.5 Preserve natural vegetation and mature trees.
3.6 Set buildings into hillside by cutting into slope.
3.7 Grading immediately under the house is encouraged; up to 500 cubic yards is allowed beyond the footprint of the house without Planning Commission review.
3.8 Retaining walls should be incorporated under the house.
3.9 Minimize grading outside of the building footprints.
3.10 Attempt to balance cut and fill on site, while recognizing that export may be necessary to preserve the natural topography.
3.11 Excess materials may be used elsewhere on the site if the grading results in minimum changes to the natural contours and will not be distinguished from surroundings within a short period of time.
3.12 Man made contours should mimic natural contours.
3.13 Avoid hiding downhill foundations with fill.

GRADING FOR DRIVEWAY PURPOSES. Minimize and mitigate visual effects.

3.14 Set house on the site so that the length of the driveway is minimized.
3.15 Minimize the visibility of driveway cuts from the property.
3.16 Use planting, wall materials and colors to minimize visual effects of driveway cuts.
3.17 Design driveway slope with the natural topography.

4 **Design retaining walls to blend into their surroundings.**

4.1 Walls should not exceed 50 feet in length.
4.2 Walls should not exceed 6 feet in height.
4.3 Stepped or terraced retaining walls, with planting in between, may be an acceptable alternative to tall retaining walls
4.4 Long continuous walls may be an acceptable alternative to tall retaining walls.
4.5 Long continuous walls may be acceptable if they undulate, are broken by buttresses or pilasters and are of appropriate natural materials such as stone or adobe. Plaster walls may be acceptable at ABR's discretion.
4.6 Use colors which tend to blend with the surrounding natural colors of the hillsides.
4.7 Use stone or other natural materials.
4.8 Use planting, wall materials and colors which minimize the visual effects of retaining walls.

5 **Use architectural features to break up unacceptable massing.**

5.1 Vary rooflines.
5.2 Use a combination of vertical and horizontal elements.
5.3 Use design elements that are consistent with the chosen style.
5.4 Use doors and windows to create patterns.
5.5 Use step backs and projections in the design to create interest.
5.6 Tall elements should be placed toward the center of the uphill portion of the building.

6 **Neighborhood Compatiblity: Design structure to fit with the existing neighborhood.**

6.1 Be compatible with neighboring houses in terms of proportion, size, mass and height.
6.2 Architectural style is not restricted to the existing neighborhood style, but should be compatible.
6.3 Avoid crowding or overwhelming neighboring residences.
6.4 Minimize creation of a vertical canyon effect between houses. When a two-story house is proposed adjacent to one story houses, the space between them is important. The space between houses should increase as wall height increases.
6.5 Avoid large expanses of building walls, especially when combined with retaining walls.
6.6 Also review Good Neighbor Policies on pages N-1 and N-2.

7 **Hillside Housing - Landscaping**

Use landscaping to blend the structure with the environment.

7.1 Preserve existing vegetation and significant trees as much as possible.
7.2 Blend the type, coloring, size and height of new vegetation into pre-existing vegetation.
7.3 Use landscaping to enhance the architecture.
7.4 Avoid using vegetation to correct problems of design, privacy and bulk.
7.5 Modify soils to minimize watering.
7.6 Revegetate graded areas as soon as possible after grading.
7.7 Use drought tolerant, native and/or Mediterranean vegetation.
7.8 Use fire retardent landscaping.
7.9 Use drip irrigation where possible.
7.10 Avoid unneccessary grading and removal of soil.
7.11 Use landscaping to control sun and wind: e.g. use deciduous trees and/or vines on the south sides of buildings to provide passive heat in the winter and cooling in the summer.

8 **Integrate fences and walls with structures and setting.**

8.1 Minimize fence and wall heights.
8.2 Break walls into low segments, stepping up or down the hill.
8.3 Use horizontal lines and proportions to reduce perception of height and bulk.
8.4 Follow topography with fence and wall design.
8.5 Minimize length of solid fences and walls on hillsides.
8.6 Use open rather than solid fence design ot reduce visual and structural bulk.
8.7 Use earth tone colors and native, natural materials.
8.8 Integrate vegetation and landscaping with fence and wall design.
8.9 Chain link fences are strongly discouraged in the Hillside Design District. Where proposed, chain link should be softened with landscaping.

9 **Miscellaneous Concerns**

9.1 Use a single architectural theme or design. Additions to existing houses should be compatible with the existing architecture or the entire structure should be remodeled in a single architectural style.
9.2 Use similar materials, colors and roof pitch on all structures on the site.

9.3 Use stepped roof and building lines.
9.4 Avoid using highly reflective materials.
9.5 Screen mechanical equipment.
9.6 Integrate solar panels into site design.
9.7 Avoid large continuous paved areas. Paved areas should be broken up by using colored or textured materials.
9.8 Also review Good Neighbor Policies on pages N-1 and N-2.

Infill Housing Techniques

Design Policies and Techniques

Many larger houses and large additions to existing houses outside the Hillside Design District will also be subject to review and approval by the ABR. In order to approve these projects, the ABR will be required to make the following findings:

1 The public health, safety and welfare will be protected.
2 The grading and development will be appropriate to the site, have been designed to avoid visible scarring, and will not significantly modify the natural topography of the site or the natural appearance of any ridgeline or hillside.
3 The project will, to the maximum extent feasible, preserve and protect any native or mature trees with a minimum trunk diameter of four inches (4") measured four feet (4') from the base of the trunk. Any specimen tree, skyline tree, or oak tree with a diameter of four inches (4") or more at four feet (4') above natural grade that must be removed will be replaced on a one-to-one basis, at a minimum. Designated Specimen, Historic and Landmark trees will not be removed.
4 The development will be consistent with the scenic character of the City and will enhance the appearance of the neighborhood.
5 The development will be compatible with the neighborhood, and its size, bulk, and scale will be appropriate to the site and
6 The development will preserve significant public scenic views of and from the hillside.

The following techniques are included in order to assist in designing a house that will be favorably reviewed by the ABR. Many of these techniques are the same as those for Hillside Housing since they apply equally well to Infill Housing.

1 **Design structure to fit with the existing neighborhood.**
1.1 Use materials and colors to reduce apparent bulk.
1.2 Select colors that are compatible with the neighborhood.
1.3 Building height should be in proportion to the style and size of the house and the lot area.
1.4 Minimize areas of maximum height.
1.5 Vary height of building elements.
1.6 Set back higher portions of structures from the lot lines to reduce the appearance of height.
1.7 Use architectural features to break up unacceptable bulk.
1.8 Vary rooflines.
1.9 Use a combination of vertical and horizontal elements.
1.10 Use design elements that are consistent with the chosen style.
1.11 Create patterns with doors and windows.

1.12 Use recessed and projecting spaces to create interest.
1.13 Be compatible with neighboring houses in terms of proportion, size, mass, and height.
1.14 Architectural style is not restricted to the existing neighborhood style, but should be compatible.
1.15 Avoid crowding or overwhelming neighboring residences.
1.16 Minimize creation of a vertical canyon effect between houses. When a two-story house is proposed adjacent to one-story houses, the space between them is important. The space between the houses should increase as wall height increases.
1.17 Also review Good Neighbor Policies on pages N-1 and N-2.

2 **Landscaping**

Use landscaping to blend the structure with the environment. Note that there are no requirements for landscaping; these are suggestions

2.1 Preserve existing vegetation and significant trees as much as possible.
2.2 Blend type, coloring, size and height of new vegetation into existing vegetation.
2.3 Use landscaping to enhance the architecture.
2.4 Avoid using vegetation to correct problems of design, privacy or bulk.
2.5 Revegetate graded areas as soon as possible after grading.
2.6 Use drought tolerant native and/or Mediterranean vegetation.
2.7 Use fire retardant landscaping.
2.8 Modify soils to minimize watering.
2.9 Use drip irrigation where possible.
2.10 Use landscaping to control sun and wind: e.g. Use of deciduous trees and/or vines on the south sides of buildings to provide passive heat in the winter and cooling in the summer.

3 **Miscellaneous Concerns**

3.1 Use a single architectural theme or design.
3.2 Use similar materials, colors and roof pitch on all structures on the site.
3.3 Use stepped roof and building lines.
3.4 Avoid use of highly reflective materials.
3.5 Screen mechanical equipment.
3.6 Integrate solar panels into site design.
3.7 Avoid large continuous paved areas. Paved areas should be broken up by using textured or colored materials.
3.8 Also review Good Neighbor Policies on pages N-1 and N-2.

4 **Fences and Walls - Integrate fences and walls with structures and setting.**

4.1 Minimize fence and wall heights. Break retaining walls into low segments.
4.2 Use horizontal lines and proportion to reduce perception of height and bulk.
4.3 Use open rather than solid fence design to reduce visual and structural bulk.
4.4 Use earth tone colors and native, natural materials.
4.5 Integrate vegetation and landscaping with fence and wall design.
4.6 Avoid chain link fences if at all possible. If proposed, chain link should be softened with landscaping.

How to be a Good Neighbor When You Build

None of the following techniques is required; they are suggested as a way to remain friends with your neighbors after the completion of your new or remodeled house. They are based on the "Golden Rule:" Do unto others as you would have them do Think about what your concerns would be if your next door neighbor were proposing to either build a new house or add on to an existing house. Incorporate those concerns into your thinking as you design your own new or remodeled house.

Before Completing Your Design

Design your addition or your new house as if you were going to live next door to it
Talk with your neighbors and show them your proposed design.

Privacy

Privacy is a major concern of residents which should be addressed in the initial stages of the design. Sensitivity to privacy is as important on hillsides as on small lots.
Locate structures and additions to maximize visual distance between buildings.
Orient your upper floor balconies toward your yard area
Orient your second story windows to protect your neighbor's privacy. You may not want to see them any more than they want to be
Use translucent windows or high windows to allow illumination while protecting privacy.
Locate areas that require more privacy away from your neighbors.
Orient active outdoor areas away from neighbors.
Keep existing vegetation that currently gives privacy to you or your neighbors
Use landscaping to screen living areas.
Use evergreen trees and shrubs to provide year round privacy.

Noise

Neighborhood noise is an ongoing issue. While these guidelines cannot do anything about late night parties, the following suggestions will contribute to the overall neighborhood peace and quiet.
Orient active outdoor areas away from neighbors.
Avoid placing noise sources at the sides of small lots (pool or air conditioning equipment, garbage can, parking areas, etc.).
Retain walls that act as noise buffers.

Lighting

There is a legitimate concern about adequate lighting for safety purposes but lighting should not spill onto your neighbor's property. sources shielded.
Light sources should be at ground level.
Limit light intensity.
Light sources should not be seen from a distance.
Design driveways so that headlights do not shine onto neighboring properties.

Views

The City has policies in the Conservation Element and Local Coastal Plan which protect public views. The City does not have a policy which protects private views. Private views are an issue between private parties. Be sensitive to your neighbors' views and work with them to minimize impacts on their views. Views are valuable.

Visit your neighbors houses to see how your building will affect their views and work to accommodate their concerns.
Be sensitive to your neighbors views in the placement and architectural appearance of your house or addition.
Reduce height of the structure to minimize blockage of views.
Locate higher portions of the structures to minimize obstruction of views.
Protect views from major living areas as well as other high quality views.
Avoid tall landscaping that interferes with your neighbors' views.
Screen solar panels, satellite dishes, radio antennae and other equipment from neighbors views to maximum amount possible.
Refer to pages H-6 and I-2 regarding design techniques to minimize impacts on views.

Supplemental Information - For full document and illustrations, please visit the **Zoning Counter at 630 Garden Street.**

Zoning Ordinance Requirements:

Tree Removal (Ch. 15.2)
Fences, Walls and Hedges (28.87.170)
Measuring Height Limits (28.04.120)
Solar Access Height Limitations (Ch. 28.11)
Calculating Slopes (28.15.080)

Glossary of Terms For full document and illustrations, please visit the **Zoning Counter at 630 Garden Street.**